3:Westermann E-5 (1910) 1912 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

stones are collected by the Arabs of Kordofan about the numerous mountains there. The amount of labour required to work them into the proper shape accounts for their high value, as well as their scarcity among the Shilluks. 439

A Shilluk man hardly leaves his home without carrying a spear or two, and a club. They have two kinds of spears, one whose blade has the form of a laurel-leaf, another with a cylindric blade, ending in a sharp point, the surface being either smooth or barbed. The shafts are of common wood without any ornaments. The spears often have a tuft of short ostrich feathers or of wool, near the butt. The cylindrical (round) spears are used not only as arms, but also in fishing. Besides the spears, they have two species of clubs, at least one of which a man always carries with him. One is simply a thick stick about one meter long, and heavy at one end. The other is about two feet and a half long, made in one solid piece of hard, heavy wood, with a big round knob at one end. ARMS 411

The Shilluks are a haughty, proud people. They are much inclined to consider themselves and everything belonging to them as superior to the strangers, including the white men. "The things of the Shilluks are good, and the things of the strangers are bad", is a common saying among them. They do not in any way want the foreigners and their mode of life. This strong disinclination is not only due to their innate character, but also to the evil experiences they have had with Arabs, Turks, Abyssinians, the Dervishes etc. CHARACTER 157 186

The well-founded feeling of suspicion and even of contempt for white people will grow less intensive or may disappear altogether in consequence of the peaceful intercourse they now have with the representatives of the white race. In conversing with a white man they at the best treat him as their equal, but hardly ever as their superior. It requires therefore considerable tact to deal with them. Once having gained confidence they are frank, open-minded, and always ready for a joke, but they are also quickly offended.

As warriors the Shilluks are brave; they make excellent soldiers in colonial troops, and are renowned as the best soldiers in the Sudan; generally they become really attached to their leaders, whether white or black. 181.

Working for the white man is done only in times of dearth, when no food is obtainable in other ways. But in spite of this difficulty the mission has, during the last few years, had remarkable results in educating the natives to regular voluntary work. — If one sees a Shilluk standig for an hour or longer almost without ever moving, except now and then scratching his head or chewing his tooth-stick, or if one meets them lying in the ashes of the village place for hours together, one might believe them to be an extremely lazy people. But this would be only partly right. Indeed during the dry season they have not much work 461 [464] [2a]

3:Westermann E-5 (1910) 1912 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

to do except hunting, fishing, building or repairing the houses, or practising some craft: their chief occupation in this time is idling about, seeing friends, dancing, etc. But in the rainy season all people, including women and children, are engaged in farm-work; during these months they are really hard-working.

To give an opinion on the mental abilities of the natives would require a long and intimate acquaintance with them. From my personal experiences I can only say that I feel an admiration for the few men who have been working with me during my studies. They were never tired in giving explanations, in procuring folklore and helping me to acquire a thorough knowledge of the language. Whenever their store of tales was exhausted, they used to go to their families in the evening to get new informations; historical reports being provided by old men, chiefly from those belonging to the royal family, while for stories, riddles, etc. women were the best source. Though we were at work day after day, which meant for them a considerable and quite unaccustomed mental exertion, they never showed any unwillingness, but were really interested in the work. I consider them an intelligent, quick-witted people. This is confirmed by their folklore. They have a decided sense and predilection for historical traditions, being the only black people of the Eastern Sudan who are able to trace back their own history for centuries. The fact that they have had, up to the European occupation of the country, a kingdom with a well-ordered provincial government, shows no doubt certain political capabilities.

II. OCCUPATIONS.

HOUSEBUILDING

Vide page 96 and 97.

The homestead is surrounded by a fence of dura-stalks. The villages are built in a circle, the open space in the centre containing sometimes a meeting-house for the men, and a small, narrow hut which is dedicated to Nyikang or some other ancient king.

AGRICULTURE

CATTLE-BREEDING

Vide page 99.

The favourite occupation of the Shilluks is cattle-breeding; cattle mean wealth and a social position, while the cultivation of the ground is merely the means of procuring daily food. Besides cattle goats and sheep are kept. The number of cattle has in earlier times undoubtedly been much larger than it is to-day, the desire of robbing cattle being one of the chief reasons for the raids of Arabs, Turks, and other enemies. The cattle census of 1903 showed 12 173 head of cattle and 63 473 sheep and goats, which is very little compared with that of the Dinkas. But the number of cattle is increasing now.

The cattle are of the zebu race, with a hump behind the neck; they are tall,

9:Howell E-5 (1937-1950) 1952 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

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OBSERVATIONS ON THE SHILLUK OF THE UPPER NILE

THE LAWS OF HOMICIDE AND THE LEGAL FUNCTIONS OF THE *RETH*

P. P. HOWELL

INTRODUCTION

PUBLISHED literature on the subject of the Shilluk is considerable[1] and there are also many interesting accounts of specific subjects buried in the files of the Administration. Nowhere, however, is there a complete account of all aspects of Shilluk life. Moreover, there has been a tendency to concentrate on certain aspects, notably the Divine Kingship, to the exclusion of others. In 1941 Mr. M. E. C. Pumphrey and I published two articles: the first a general summary account of the Shilluk tribe based on Mr. Pumphrey's observations and wide experience; the second a more detailed analysis of one Shilluk settlement,[2] the result of fieldwork carried out in 1937. In 1944 I had the privilege of attending the installation of *reth* Anei Kur and, together with Mr. W. P. G. Thomson, published a full account.[3] Subsequently Mr. Thomson published his 'Further Notes on the Death of a Shilluk Reth',[4] after the death of *reth* Anei in 1943. This, with Professor Evans-Pritchard's Frazer Lecture, *The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk of the Nilotic Sudan*,[5] represents the total of information published on the subject of the Shilluk in recent years.

The Shilluk are an exceptionally conservative people and, perhaps the legacy of centuries of resistance to external aggression, have a natural distaste for innovation. Yet times are changing and it is therefore all the more important that the gaps in our knowledge of Shilluk society as it was during the last few decades, and is now, should be filled. During the last two years I have had occasional opportunities to visit the Shilluk and to continue fieldwork, begun in 1937. The results of these investigations,

[1] See Bibliography, pp. 118–19.

[2] Pumphrey, M. E. C., 'The Shilluk Tribe', and Howell, P. P., 'The Shilluk Settlement', *S.N.R.*, vol. xxiv, 1941.

[3] 'The Death of a Reth of the Shilluk and the Installation of his Successor.' By Howell, P. P., and Thomson, W. P. G., ibid., vol. xxvii, 1946.

[4] Ibid., vol. xxix, part ii, 1948.

[5] Evans-Pritchard, E. E., Frazer Lecture 1948 Cambridge University Press, 1948.

'*Africa*', *the Journal of the International African Institute, is published by the Institute, but except where otherwise stated the writers of the articles are alone responsible for the opinions expressed.*

16: Cann G-5 (ca. 1928) 1929 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN IDLE SHILLUK.

By Captain G. P. Cann.

WHILE passing through the river ports of the Central District of the Upper Nile Province a casual observer is prone to comment on the apparent idleness of the Shilluk, as if it was the normal state of the tribe; and although such a traveller is probably within his rights in drawing this conclusion from the abnormal conditions under which he meets the Shilluk in river ports—for the native of the Southern Districts of the Sudan has certainly achieved a high standard in the art of doing nothing when on holiday—he is desired to remember that the Shilluk seen on the river bank on the arrival of a steamer is keenly interested (and even amused) in all the strange sights that meet his eye: the steamer itself with its tiers of decks with the Rais and sailors on the roof, the motley collection of humanity on the barges, and by no means least the *buing* or foreigner with his hated camera and amazing dress and incredible customs.

Can one wonder, then, that the Shilluk is prepared to stand for hours and simply gaze on such interesting sights?

The writer is 'on trek' at the moment, and is so struck by the strong relief afforded by village life that he has fallen to the use of the pen in vindication of the libelled Shilluk.

Awaking long before dawn one finds that smoke fires amongst the cattle have been kept up assiduously throughout the night, and already shadowy forms are passing amongst the herds and moving a beast where necessary to get more benefit from the smoke.

Dawn approaches and the herds are becoming restless, so every man turns to to release them, and four or five youths drive the cattle away some two or three miles inland, where flies are known to be less troublesome, and a first feed of dry grass is available to start the day.

Almost immediately hosts of small boys appear on the scene, the smaller ones—from seven to ten years of age—to bring out the goats and sheep from the *luaks* in which they have passed the night, safe from

17: Pumphrey G-5 (1934-1938) 1941
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

APPENDIX V.

THE CHARACTER OF THE SHILLUK AND SOME OF THEIR CONVENTIONS.

177 186 The most striking Shilluk characteristic is pride of race, from which most other features of their character spring. Their intense conservatism, for example, results from a conviction that everything not Shilluk in origin is inevitably bad. Their much complained of insolence results from their belief that they are every bit as good as the foreigner and just a little better because he has that great initial handicap of not being a Shilluk. It is remarkable that so few Shilluk can understand Arabic considering that no Shilluk village is more than thirty miles from either Tonga, Malakal, Kodok or Kaka, where Arabic is spoken and that from early times their contact with the north has been incessant if not always of the happiest. The *Reth's* chief policeman, an intelligent [626] man who acts as his agent in Malakal and is constantly in attendance at the office, can speak no Arabic.

177 153 Nor is the cause simply lack of intelligence and adaptability. When a Shilluk leaves the tribe and becomes, for example, a Medical Assistant in Malakal or Tonga he dresses in western fashion because otherwise he would be laughed at. Likewise in such circumstances his children will wear seamed garments like the children of the townspeople. But as soon as he goes back to his village, whether on leave or retirement, he at once resumes the traditional tribal dress. Those who have had an opportunity to compare their intelligence with that of the Dinka, Nuer and northern Sudanese say that they are slightly more intelligent than the Nuer or the Dinka and about equal in ability to the Northerner. Certainly the Shilluk who know the English language speak it well, and it cannot be said that they are bad linguists in face of such examples as that of a notorious *Kwanyireth* of medical connexion who speaks English, Arabic, Dinka, Nuer and Anuak with great fluency and gets along adequately in Murle. Pure conservatism and the fact that all local merchants speak Shilluk accounts for the almost non-existent progress made by the Arabic language in a century of contact.

● 181 Disobedience, insubordination and insolence are according to many the chief Shilluk vices. The first two, although no doubt very

17: Pumphrey G-5 (1934-1938) 1941
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

tiresome to those who encounter them, do not merit discussion. Subordination and obedience are not in themselves virtues. That the Shilluk are often highly insolent to those in authority is undeniable. This insolence usually takes the form of a supercilious silence and apparent complete disdain implying that "diplomatic relations have now been broken off." This attitude is really not exactly what it seems. In fact it is suppressed rage; but since their symptoms of temper differ from our own we are inclined, often wrongly, to think that it is pure calculated insolence.

The Shilluk have a code of manners which is remarkable. This is instilled into them when young. Even as neatness and order prevail within their houses so are the children taught good manners. When four or five years of age they are made to sit up straight at meals and eat properly. These good manners remain with them through life and distinguish their bearing from that of neighbouring tribes. Doubtless it is in part an empty form but the fact remains that the Shilluk manners are excellent, and their way of sitting in a meeting with their legs drawn backwards to one side and the soles of their feet concealed from view is very neat. No smoking is tolerated at such meetings and their general tone is orderly.

There is a habit, when listening to a superior speaking, of punctuating his remarks with a formal indication of assent. The word thus used varies with the speaker, and is most obvious when the speaker is the *Reth*. Here the word is either *kite kwan* ("the likeness of his ancestor," *i.e.*, Nyikang) or *Kunajuok* ("God's last born"). For members of *Kwar Reth* the word is *Kaiyo*, for the *Ororo* it is *Nyagol* and for some reason for the *Jung* clan it is *Dhiang*.[1]

It has already been explained how certain members of the *Kwar Reth* must be addressed by their titles or with their titles prefixed to their names. There are also certain respectful modifications which must be made to normal speech when speaking to or about the *Reth*, a *Nyireth*, or anyone of importance. These modifications relate largely to verbs of motion. The fiction has to be laboriously maintained that such

1. *Kaiyo* means "eldest born," *Nyagol* means "one of the family" and *Dhiang* means, literally "cow."

28: Oyler M-5 (ca. 1918) 1918 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

they made answer. The spirit then said: «I was eaten by lions, the lions were two, had the lion been one I would not have been eaten, for you know me, that I am strong». The people replied: «We know that you are strong». He continued: «I am sorry for my mother only». At that she wept. They beat the drum, and he said «I return». His brother alone doubted, and said: «My spirit is strong, my brother lives». He was chided with unbelief. The next morning they buried a wooden effigy of Shol, and had a mourning dance for him. In the midst of the dance he returned, and wanted to know who had died that they were mourning. The dance was stopped. The medium was humiliated, and refused to attempt to work in other cases.

Such cases as the foregoing are usually treated by the women. The men servants of the king treat the river sickness. The patient with two sheep is taken to the river. The sheep must be male and female. The head of the male is put under the water. It is then taken out, and its four feet tied together, with its head between the front feet. The healer then puts it into the river, and as it is carried off by the current it takes the sickness with it. The female sheep is the fee of the healer. They then go to the village and kill a sheep for a feast.

When a servant of a king begs he says: «The king is begging you», and if his requests are modest they are granted.

In death the servants of the king are honoured by the same kind of burial as is accorded to a chief.

They look upon it as a form of spirit possession. The spirit is good, or at least not as malignant as some of the other spirits that may take possession of a person. A failure in no way lessens their power, as the people are sure that some other healer would have been successful. While a successful cure brings great glory to the healer.

This class typifies a longing of the native mind. They are seeking some power to bridge the gulf between the finite and infinite. The power that belongs to God is to pass to the king, and then by his spirit to be given to his servant, who is to use it for the good of the people.

The mediums prey upon the people. Often they seem to be sincere in the belief that they have the power claimed, though just as often they seem to realize that they are deceiving the people.

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

funeral or some such occasion calling for special feasting. It would tax the ingenuity of a European to devise a system, and keep a battery of clerks in constant employment and a filing cabinet in constant use to keep an up-to-date check on the wanderings of the various animals of any one bride-herd. Not so with the simple Shilluk however. Inside his woolly head—admittedly not particularly concerned with anything that does not pertain to cattle—he keeps all the details of each individual cow in his herd. He knows all their comings in and goings out, all their risings up and their sittings down. Each cow has a special and distinctive colour and each colour a special and distinctive name and he knows them all and can describe them in detail. He can tell you offhand the life history of any cow; its previous owners as it passed from dowry to dowry eventually to become a member of his, and when he has parted with it, he follows its subsequent career with unflagging interest, can name the various people who have had it since it left his ownership and knows just where it can be found at any given time.

Our young benedict is now happily married and settled down to a life of connubial bliss. But among the Shilluk, as among their more sophisticated Western brethren, the course of true love does not always run smooth. The lady, who in the eyes of her lord is a mere chattel, something that he has bargained and paid for, must prove that she is up to standard. Not indeed that a Shilluk wife becomes the absolute slave of her husband, bearing all the burdens of the day and the heats, while he passes the rest of his days in slothful idleness. Far from it. Both have their recognized duties and one will assist the other should occasion call for it; thus the wife will at times assist her husband with the planting, weeding and reaping, whilst he does not consider it beneath his dignity to nurse the baby while his spouse is making the daily trip to the river for water, or to sit for hours monotonously agitating a gourd of milk in the hope that eventually it will turn into butter. But the primary duty of a Shilluk wife is to become a Shilluk mother, and if perchance she proved to be barren